

TWITTER FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS: A QUICK HOW-TO GUIDE

What is Twitter?

Launched in 2006, Twitter is an online social networking resource on which registered users can share and read “tweets” of up to 140 characters of text, links, and images. For academics, Twitter is a great space to network, connect, join conversations, share your work, and make a public impact. It can also be an easy way to stay in touch with scholars that you meet at conferences or other events.

If you're already on Twitter, great! If you're new to Twitter, this guide will help you get started.

Twitter and the Graduate Association for Food Studies

A few things to know:

- **Follow @gradfoodstudies.** This is the GAFS Twitter handle. We tweet GAFS updates including calls for papers and publication announcements for the *Graduate Journal of Food Studies*. We also tweet about other CFP opportunities, jobs, and great food studies conferences, organizations, and events.
- **Include your Twitter handle on presentation slides.** If you present at a conference or give a talk, include your Twitter handle in your presentation. At a minimum, include it on your title slide so live-tweeters can mention you in their tweets. A best practice is to include your contact information, including Twitter handle, in a footer on every slide. This can be particularly helpful at large conferences where participants can come into talks late and may not be sure who is speaking. **If you do not want participants to tweet about your presentation,** make that clear on your title slide and/or in a running footer.

Setting up a Twitter Account (if you don't have one yet)

Before you join Twitter, you'll want to consider if Twitter will be a solely professional forum for you or a more informal social space as well. Will you tweet just about food studies and academia or will you also live-tweet when you watch TV and how your favorite sports team is doing? As part of your online presence, you'll want to consider how you use Twitter to your greatest benefit. Overall, you'll want to stay positive and collegial.

Once you've thought through these issues, setting up a Twitter account is quick and easy. Just follow these steps:

- **Sign up** at twitter.com.
- **Choose a Twitter handle** that is as short as possible. It can be a combination of your name or initials (e.g. @JABrillatSavarin) or a word or very short phrase that relates to your research (e.g. @foodaphorisms). If you go the word/phrase route, you can list your full name as your user name, so people will be able to identify the account as yours.
- **Use the bio space** efficiently. If you're cultivating a purely academic or professional profile, include information like your discipline, institution, and areas of research interest. If you're using Twitter more informally, you may want to also include personal information (e.g. avid baker, dog lover, yoga addict).
- **Choose a profile picture.** For a purely academic presence, choose a photo that is professional looking or an avatar that relates to your research or general persona. Don't leave the profile photo as the default "egg" image. It makes you look like a spammer.
- **Add a header photo.** It can relate to your research (e.g. an archival photo or field site shot), academic life (e.g. a shot of books, a reading room, or coffee), or your personal life (e.g. the beach, your dog, your loved ones, etc.).
- **Link** to your blog, website, or department grad student webpage.

Sample twitter profiles from the GAFS membership:



How and What to Tweet

Tweets can be a maximum of 140 characters, so it's a medium that requires concise communication. Try to not just tweet statements, but engage in conversations. Ask questions. Provide answers. Make new contacts. A tweet can be all text, but including mentions, hashtags, and links make your tweets more informational and more likely to generate social connections.

- **Mentions.** For example, if you attend a talk on campus or read a great article and tweet about it, mention the speaker or author using their Twitter handle. The author just might retweet you or respond! Here's an example:
 - Really enjoyed **@soulfoodscholar**'s "An Illustrated History of Soul Food" on **@FirstWeFeast**: <http://bit.ly/1Mk3arK> #foodstudies #foodhistory
- **Hashtags.** Placed within or at the end of tweets, hashtags help you to be part of a conversation. By following a hashtag, users can see what an entire community is tweeting on a particular topic (e.g. #foodhistory) or at a particular event like a conference (e.g. #GAFS15). Use hashtags as much as possible so your tweets aren't just floating in the Twitter universe. Give them a home and a community.
- **Links.** If you tweet a link, don't waste characters on a long URL of (sometimes) very random characters. Use a link shortener like bitly.com or goo.gl to create brief, crisp links. Short links also make your tweets easier to read.
- **Retweet, Quote, Favorite & Reply to Tweets.** To show support or agreement or to help spread the word on a topic, you can retweet or favorite others' tweets by clicking on the circular arrow or star icons that appear below the tweet. You can also quote a tweet or use the retweet abbreviation—"RT"—to offer your own commentary. You can also reply directly to the user to start a conversation. If you'd rather your comments be private, send a direct message instead.
- **Proofread.** You can delete, but not edit tweets, so make sure to proofread before you publish. If live-tweeting at a conference, also check for accuracy. Make every effort to respect all presenters and their works in progress and do not misrepresent their ideas.

A sample tweet using mentions, short link, and hashtag that's been favorited:



Live-Tweeting Academic Conferences

Live-tweeting is tweeting in real time as an event is taking place. Live-tweeting at a conference not only provides an opportunity to connect with fellow presenters and conference participants, but also with interested parties unable to attend the event in person. Perhaps one of the reasons historians have taken to Twitter is the way that it creates a digital archive of an event, particularly when aggregated with a hashtag. By following a conference hashtag, you can be part of the conversation from within the room or from a world away.

Whether you're live-tweeting from your phone, tablet, or laptop during the conference, make sure to attribute and cite sources, using the speaker's Twitter handle or name if they don't have one.

A basic live-tweet formula is:

[Presenter's handle/name]: [summary, comment, or "quote"] #[conference hashtag]

Sample live tweets:

- The first panel of #GAFS15 is starting now! I'm attending "The Politics of Commerce and Authority: Science, Eating, and the Body."
- Great talk @saramhefny! I'd love to talk more about food identities and diaspora with you. #GAFS15
- A great final panel at #GAFS15. @aadeleon of @UofT discusses urban food insecurity in Manila.

If you find literally tweeting live, in the moment to be too distracting or difficult, share your tweets with the conference hashtag during a coffee or lunch break or at the end of the day. Another strategy can be to simply retweet others who are live-tweeting.

Hashtags for Future Reference

As you continue on Twitter, these are great food studies hashtags to follow. Perhaps of particular interest, GAFS created **#acfoodcfp** to share academic calls for papers, presentations, and awards and **#acfoodjob** to alert the foods studies community to open academic jobs (tenure-track and otherwise) related to food.

#acfoodcfp
#acfoodjob
#foodhistory
#foodhist
#foodstudies
#GAFS

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